



July Tree of the Month

The Franklinia

The Franklinia tree (*Franklinia alatamaha*) is a rare and beautiful flowering tree with a remarkable connection to both American botany and Benjamin Franklin. Native to a small area along the Altamaha River in Georgia, Franklinia was discovered in 1765 by botanists John and William Bartram. By the early 1800s, the tree had disappeared entirely from the wild, making it extinct in its natural habitat. Every Franklinia tree growing today descends from seeds collected by the Bartrams before the species vanished.

The Bartrams named the tree Franklinia in honor of their friend and supporter, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was not only a statesman, inventor, and writer, but also a strong advocate for science and the study of the natural world. He maintained a friendship with the Bartram family, especially John Bartram, and encouraged the advancement of American scientific inquiry and horticulture. Naming the tree after Franklin recognized his contributions to intellectual life in the colonies and his support of botanical exploration.

Franklinia trees are especially admired for their striking white, camellia-like flowers with golden centers and brilliant red-orange fall foliage. Because of its rarity, beauty, and survival through cultivation alone, the Franklinia tree has become a symbol of preservation, resilience, and the importance of protecting the natural world. Come to Green Hills Farm Arboretum at Pearl S. Buck International to see our Franklinia tree near the grave of Pearl S. Buck.

